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NAME OF AUTHOR/*NOM DE L'AUTEUR* EUGENE E. BALAY

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NAME OF SUPERVISOR/*NOM DU DIRECTEUR DE THÈSE* Dr. R. Bryce

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE COMPLETION AND NON-COMPLETION OF CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

by

© EUGENE ELMER BALAY

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled ...Factors Associated With the Completion and Non-completion of Correspondence Courses.....

submitted by .....Eugene Elmer Balay.....

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

...R. Burger.....
Supervisor

...D. Massey...

...K.L. Ward.....

Date: ..February 9, 1978..

ABSTRACT

Because the dropout problem is a serious one and very little research has been done on the correspondence student, this thesis sought to identify several factors which affected correspondence course completions. Such information can be useful to the Alberta Correspondence School and to other correspondence schools as well.

Data were collected from student records at the Alberta Correspondence School and from questionnaires sent to 531 former students selected at random from the 1973-74 registration records. The questionnaire sought information about initial enrollment and about factors which influenced course completion or non-completion.

Questions were so structured that the student had to choose one of several statements to indicate his response. If none of the statements were satisfactory, the student could write his own response. Of the 531 questionnaires mailed out, 64.4% were usable in the analysis.

The findings revealed that female students outnumbered male students by a ratio of 2-to-1. Most of the respondents were in the 16 to 17 year age group. Distance from Edmonton reduced enrollments, with almost a quarter of all respondents listing Edmonton as their home address.

Students whose parents had completed high school were more likely to complete correspondence courses than were those students whose parents had not reached high school. Students who had attempted correspondence study were more positive towards it than were those students who had not. Female students chose correspondence as a means of future education by a margin of 3-to-1 over the male students.

Respondents identified two factors as the most influential in encouraging enrollment in correspondence study. One was a greater variety in course offerings; the other was more personal interaction with the teacher.

The three most popular courses were Health and Personal Development 10, Accounting 10, and English 30, accounting for almost a fifth of all registrations. The main reason given by the respondents for enrolling was a need to make up a deficiency for a high school diploma.

Most students who completed their courses did so within four to eight months after registration, sending a lesson for correction approximately every ten to fifteen days. Non-completers sent lessons at a slower rate, stopping after the sixth to tenth lesson.

Students generally wanted their teachers to be considerate and humanistic. When enrolling, they wanted information about courses and educational programs. Two factors were identified as influential in their decision

to discontinue correspondence study. One was a loss of interest in the course and the other was the length of time required to complete the course.

Ten recommendations were made in Chapter 6 and are summarized below:

1. The Alberta Correspondence School should establish offices in other urban centres.
2. The fee schedule should be revised.
3. Initial enrollment should be limited to one course for most students.
4. Courses should consist of units of six to ten lessons.
5. More personal contact should be encouraged between teacher and student.
6. Existing province-wide telephone systems should be used more extensively by teachers.
7. A travelling laboratory should be established.
8. Teachers should make frequent handwritten comments on student lessons.
9. Teachers should maintain regular contact with students by mail and telephone.
10. Students should be contacted when their lessons do not come in regularly or when two months have elapsed after registration and no lessons have been received.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

School dropouts are a common concern of all educators. In the 1970's, the Alberta Correspondence School became concerned with this problem. Studies do not seem to have been done, however, nor has much been written about the correspondence school dropout. This thesis describes those students who were enrolled in 1973-74 at the Alberta Correspondence School and who completed or did not complete their courses. An effort was made to identify those factors which contributed to or impeded course completions.

A cursory glance at the registrations in the Alberta Correspondence School revealed four groups: one group registered and completed their courses within the initial registration period; another group re-registered once or twice before completing their courses; a third group began returning lessons but did not complete; and the fourth group returned no lessons at all. In this study, an attempt was made to identify those factors in the course materials, the teaching methods, the registration procedures, and in the student who chose correspondence study which may have influenced completion.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify factors which appeared to be associated with the completion of correspondence courses among students registered in the 1973-74 school year at the Alberta Correspondence School. A related purpose was to identify some of the factors which appeared to be associated with the non-completion of correspondence courses.

Significance and Need for the Study

Because research on the correspondence school student is meagre, institutions such as the Alberta Correspondence School occasionally base their offerings on limited information and assumptions. It is hoped that this study has added some information on the profile of the correspondence school student. It is also hoped that this information may be useful to other correspondence schools.

All studies on school dropouts appear to be related to the classroom student. Correspondence school students seem to have been neglected. The correspondence school students are made up largely of classroom students and adults who are either trying to complete requirements for a high school diploma, or who are upgrading their skills and knowledge in a specific field of interest for a variety of reasons.

It has been assumed that classroom dropouts and correspondence school dropouts have similar reasons for discontinuing their school programs. This study has attempted to deny or confirm that similarity.

Outline of the Study and Organization of the Thesis

Data were collected from the student record cards at the Alberta Correspondence School and from questionnaires sent to a sample of students. The questionnaire sought data on the reasons for initial enrollment and subsequent completion or non-completion. Questions were also asked to determine the factors which may have encouraged a student to complete a course. The questionnaire appears reproduced in its entirety in Appendix 4.

The questionnaire survey method of data collection was decided on after a review of literature indicated the advantages of such a method of data collection. A summary of these findings appears in Appendix 1.

The questionnaire used for this study was based on those used by Van Hesterin (1969), Penner (1970), Scragg (1968), and Harvie (1969). It was modified to accommodate the correspondence situation. Two letters were sent as follow-ups to ensure a high return. These letters are reproduced in Appendices 7 and 9.

The responses were tabulated by the University of Alberta Computing Services and are reported in Chapters IV and V. Literature concerning some of the factors which researchers have found to influence classroom dropouts is reviewed in Chapter II. The method of data collection and its analysis is described in Chapter III. The final chapter contains a summary of the study and offers a brief discussion of its implications to other correspondence schools and particularly to the Alberta Correspondence School.

Definitions of Terms Used

Alberta Correspondence School (The School) - a branch of the Alberta Government Department of Education. It is located in Edmonton, and in 1973 it had an approximate enrollment of 17,000 students enrolled in about 20,000 courses. The teaching staff of about 100 offered courses ranging from the elementary grades through the secondary grades.

Completion - a course in which a final evaluation was assigned.

Correspondence lesson - a unit of study approximately equal to two weeks of classroom instruction.

Correspondence school dropout - a student who enrolls and submits a few lessons, but who does not receive a final evaluation or write a final test.

Correspondence student - a student who is enrolled in at least one course by correspondence, and who does his study at home or on his own without direct supervision by a teacher.

Non-completion - a course in which some lessons are graded, but no final evaluation is assigned.

Non-credit course - a general interest course for which no credit is given towards a high school diploma, and which has no final test or evaluation.

Non-school student - a registrant who is over sixteen years of age and is not attending a public school.

Non-starter - a registration in which no lessons are submitted for grading, or in which lessons are returned to the student without a grading because of inadequate work, or in which fewer than three lessons are submitted for grading.

Registrant - a person who completes an application for a correspondence course.

Registration period - normally the time between July 1 and September 1 of the following year. Students may register at any time during this period but they must complete the course(s) by September 1.

Re-registration - a second registration in the same course. The second registration period ends on September 1 following re-registration.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The school dropout has long been a concern of educators and governments. Dropping out of school also should be a concern of the dropout. Fewer opportunities will be available to the dropout than to the graduate. Employers want potential employees to have a general education and to be capable of being retrained if the job changes. (Cervantes, 1965:1-6)

The problem, however, may be within the student. Margaret Andrews (1963:10) states, "Most (of these) students lack the motivation and attitudes which make it possible to hold a job even if they could find one." An indication of this problem was presented at the Annual Conference of the Canadian Council of Teachers of English held in Calgary, Alberta, in August, 1976. A panel of employer representatives from Simpson Sears, the Alberta Government Telephones, and the Royal Bank of Canada indicated that they wanted their new employees to have the basic skills of communication. This included writing and speaking skills. The panel felt that a high school graduate who had the proper attitude towards accuracy in expression would probably be successful and would be

able to learn the specifics of the job for which he was hired. On the basis of personal observation of their employees, the panel members felt that the standards of excellence and literacy were lower in recent years than they were in the past two decades.

Two American presidents saw incomplete education as a problem. In July, 1963, President John F. Kennedy called it "a serious national problem." He said that:

> The future of any country ... is damaged ... whenever any of its children is not educated to the fullest extent of his capacity; ... — and that is a waste we cannot afford.

Accordingly, his administration established a fund of $250,000 for a program which had counsellors visit school dropouts to encourage them to return to school.

President Lyndon B. Johnson continued the program because he recognized that:

> Every child must be encouraged to get as much education as he has the ability to take. We want this not only for his sake — but for the Nation's sake. Nothing matters more for the future of our country ... for freedom is fragile if citizens are ignorant.
>
> (January 12, 1965)

In Canada, the government of Alberta in 1967 recognized the need for human resource development and made money available for several programs. The federal government also made money available specifically for adult training programs.

These efforts were made in an affort to improve the lot of the average citizen, among other things. As pointed out by Miller (1963:6), the high school diploma is a minimum "essential in an unfinished climb." He found that the high school graduate earned only 59% of the lifetime earnings of a college graduate. The high school dropout earned about 86% of the high school graduate's lifetime earnings, and the grade school graduate could look forward to about 84% of the high school dropout's earnings. From an economic point of view, neither the nation nor the citizen can afford the luxury of an incomplete education. (Miller, 1963:4)

Guidance and Counselling

The Social Planning Council of Toronto in its REPORT ON SCHOOL DROPOUTS (1961:4-6) felt that an individual's potential began at an early age. Because of this, they recommended that good counselling begin at a very early age in order that the individual achieve the maximum benefit of his potential. The Council also recommended that research be done at the lower levels of school and that more counselling be given to students at this level. Further, they cited a need for better teacher training methods and better student material to be trained as teachers.

Byrne (1958:493-496) stated that because students dropped out of school to go to work, or because they lost

interest, the schools should make an attempt to identify the potential dropout early in his school career. When that student is identified, counselling should be given to either remedy the lack of interest, or to "provide the kinds of experiences that offer fruitful learning so the student can leave with pride." As indicated in a study by Allison (1959:84-88), the happy student is more likely to stay in school than is the unhappy one. Although Allison recognized that dropping out was the result of a cluster of factors, most of the students in his study left school because they felt it had nothing worthwhile to offer them.

The plea for programs suited to the needs of students comes from many sources. Tannenbaum (1966:2-4) cites several reasons for retaining students in school. Among them is the gradual shift from blue-collar jobs to white-collar jobs as industry becomes more and more automated, with a resultant shift in population to large urban centres. Further, a desire has emerged for more flexible and varied curricula as employers seek people who are adaptable to retraining as their jobs change. Tannenbaum suggested that schools offer exploratory work courses instead of pure vocational training.

In the 1970's the plea was still the same. Rhodes et al (1971:1) identified the potential dropout as one who did not participate in the life of the school,

one who felt alienated from the teaching staff, and one who preferred courses which led to a specific occupation. They also found that large schools tended to create a feeling of alienation among students more so than did the smaller schools. Their proposed solution was the establishment of community centres of recreational, cultural, and educational activities. School programs, they said, should be occupation-oriented, and there should be non-graded activities to prepare the student to fit into the community. Audio-visual material was recommended, with an emphasis on the development of acceptable social behavior, personality development, and home and family living. Basic communication skills and remedial reading were also suggested as part of the curriculum. (Rhodes et al, 1971:37-50)

Home Background

Basil Fletcher (1968:37) claims that:

> A child's home background and environment play as large or even a larger part in educational growth than innate ability.

In June, 1976, Ronald Kotulak, science editor of THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE, reported on a school program in Waukegan, Illinois. The program encompassed students from kindergarten through Grade 3 and featured "positive discipline, token rewards, individual instruction, and heavy parental involvement." The program was intended

to stimulate students to learn and to enjoy learning. The key to the success of the program, according to the associate superintendent of the Waukegan Public School system, was the individualized attention and parental involvement. A learning atmosphere was created and encouraged. The students' mental environment was thus altered although their physical environment was not. Of the two hundred fifty parents involved, one quarter came back to school, and two were graduated as teachers.

The success of the program was determined by the increase in the average reading and arithmetic scores of the children. Before the program started in 1969, the average student was three to four years below his grade level in general achievement. In 1976, the students were scoring at or slightly above the national American average. Especially gratifying to the teachers involved was the student response. Over 80% of the students said they liked school or that school made them happy. From this finding, it would appear that a happy student will stay in school longer, while an unhappy one will drop out at any early opportunity.

The program in Waukegan took children who were in low socio-economic groups and made achievers out of a group that was doomed to academic failure according to all sociological predictions. Research has indicated that students from low income families will not complete.

school. Malik (1966:117) reports that only 9% of the students from families on welfare completed high school, whereas 32% of the students from families not on welfare completed high school.

Another important consideration is the student's perception of himself and how he sees himself fitting into his social and educational community. Often a student feels that his poverty has relegated him to a lower economic and social class. Friesen (1967:299-310) points out that "lower class adolescents leave school prematurely ... because of ... rejection by teachers of the lower class child for what he is and what he feels." Parents of low income families find that they change jobs frequently, resulting in frequent moves. Students from such families have a higher incidence of dropping out of school than do students who move less frequently. (National Education Association, 1965:64)

Just as important as the economic level of the family is the parental attitude towards education. Fleming (1957:22) found that students in university tended to have fathers who were in high level occupations. He also found that students with higher education tended to have parents who also had a higher level of education. Willerman (1954:173-177) concluded that a positive parental attitude was important if students were to continue in high school.

Part of the general attitude towards school attendance is the problem of the part-time student. For whatever reasons, the student who devotes only a part of his day to attending classes tends to be the dropout. There may be too many outside pressures, the goal may not be clear, or perhaps dropping one course is easier than dropping a whole program. Whatever the reasons, the part-time student does not have a good completion record.

Other Factors

Many reasons are given for dropping out of school. High on the list in several studies is student expectation of the school, the program, or the teacher. Harvie (1969:218-222) lists low marks, loss of interest, and general dissatisfaction with the course as prime reasons for discontinuing studies. Penner (1970:iv) reports that students left school because they found "nothing worthwhile", there was no challenge in the school, or they did not like the teacher.

John Ede (1967:125-127) was able to isolate several factors which identified future dropouts. A record of failing grades discouraged the student, with a resulting loss of interest in school. Students with a reading difficulty had low motivation because the material was too difficult, so they soon dropped out. Frequent school changes also contributed to a loss of

interest because of the lack of opportunity to become involved with school activities. As reported in the Waukegan program, a student who was unhappy in school was not likely to stay there. Ede concluded that it was the school's responsibility to retain students.

With regard to retention, several studies have identified some factors that tend to reduce the dropout rate. Van Hesterin (1969:184-186) endorsed better guidance programs in high schools, especially by making information about financial aid more readily available to the students. Many students listed financial problems as a major reason for discontinuance. Van Hesterin also suggested that information about various educational opportunities be made available to the students. It seems that high school graduates are often unaware of the openings available to them after graduation. Also high on the list was encouragement from teachers and counsellors to help the high school student realize his own personal worth. Students who are self-confident are more likely to be satisfied with themselves, and they are more likely to go further in high school.

Finally, Penner (1970:89) found that students could be induced to stay longer in school if certain criteria were met. He found that students wanted their teachers to be considerate and fair. They wanted less homework to leave them more time for personal endeavors.

On the other hand, they wanted a wider choice of subjects and practical courses to prepare them for a place in society.

Summary of Chapter II

The literature has indicated that employers want prospective employees to have basic communication skills and to be flexible enough to be retrained as their jobs change. Employers also want their employees to have a proper attitude towards accuracy, especially as it pertains to expression. Governments have recognized that educated citizens are good for the country and have provided monies to help educate the adult.

Early counselling has been found necessary to identify the potential dropout and to seek solutions or alternatives to dropping out of school. Preparing the student to fit into the world of work is one way of encouraging the student to stay in school. Remedial programs in reading and other basic skills are also essential in the struggle to retain students in school.

Parental involvement in school activities tends to improve parental attitudes towards education. With positive parental encouragement, students are more likely to stay in school longer.

Other factors such as low marks, loss of interest in school, frequent family moves, lack of participation

in school activities, and financial difficulties have all been listed as factors which lead to dropping out of school. On the other hand, praise and encouragement from the teacher, information about vocational opportunities after graduation, and a wide variety of subject choices in school have been identified as factors which tend to reduce the incidence of dropping out.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The Sample

A stratified random sample of approximately five hundred students was selected from the 16,550 students registered during the 1973-74 regular school year at the Alberta Correspondence School. This included students enrolled in non-credit interest courses as well as in the standard high school courses. A number of students chose more than one course, and on occasion chose both credit and non-credit courses.

Students enrolled at the Alberta Correspondence School are assigned one of four series of registration numbers. Numbers prefixed with the numeral "1" are assigned to those students who are under eighteen years of age and who have no credits in high school courses. Numbers with the prefix "2" are assigned to those who are under eighteen and who have some high school credits or who are taking Grade 11 courses. The prefix "3" is assigned to those students who are enrolled in the former departmental subjects (now referred to as the Grade 12 academic subjects.) The numeral "4" is prefixed to all other registration numbers. A further classification separates those who are presently attending a regular

classroom by adding "s" to the prefixed numeral. Those not attending a classroom are assigned the letter "c."

In order to arrive at a representative sample of this enrollment, the ratio of these groups to the total enrollment was approximated in the sample. Table 1 shows the relationship of the enrollment to the sample. As may be noted, the percentage in each group is similar to the percentage each group represents of the total enrollment. The percentage of usable responses also bears a close similarity to that same ratio. Given the above observations, the sample was assumed to be an adequate representation of the total school enrollment.

A table of random numbers was used to choose students randomly within each group. When questionnaires were returned because the addressee could not be located, the next random number in the table was selected as a replacement. This procedure was followed to ensure a representative number of questionnaires.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire is reproduced in its entirety in Appendix 4. It consists of three sections. Section A pertains to the student's circumstances at the time he received the questionnaire, which was approximately one year after enrollment. Section B pertains to the circumstances at the time the student sent the last lesson in to be corrected. Section C seeks to determine how the

Table 1

Relationship Between Total School Enrollment and Sample

Registration Series	Total Enrollment		Sample Used		Usable Responses	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1 (c&s)	1755	10.6	57	10.7	39	11.4
2 (c&s)	3623	21.9	118	22.2	76	22.2
3 (c&s)	3093	18.7	99	18.6	63	18.4
4 (c&s)	8079	48.8	257	48.4	164	48.0
Totals	16,550	100.0	531	99.9	342	100.0

student felt about his experiences with correspondence study. In addition, a personal data sheet was compiled from the records available at the Alberta Correspondence School. This data sheet was also used as a record of when the questionnaire and various follow-up letters and letters of thanks and appreciation were sent. The data sheet appears in Appendix 3.

The questions were derived from a variety of sources, with Van Hesterin (1969), Scragg (1968), and Harvie (1969) providing many of the ideas. A draft of the questionnaire was constructed and administered to twenty-seven former correspondence school students. Each student was contacted personally and the reason for the questionnaire was explained. The students were asked to indicate where they may have had difficulty in interpreting the questions. They were also asked to indicate whether they felt the question took too long to complete. As a result of this preliminary testing, several changes were made in the questions. In particular, additional space for other comments was added to every question. The final draft was then prepared and distributed to the sample of students.

The questionnaire was constructed so that the respondent could choose one of several statements which most closely reflected his answer. If none of the statements was accurate enough, space was provided for written

comments. As a result of these comments, responses were added to the list of choices before being analysed by the Computing Services. Occasionally responses were grouped because of similarity and to accommodate the ten-integer system on the computer cards.

Each response was labelled with a single integer from 0 to 9. The respondents placed one of these in the "Response" column. Where two numbers were written by the respondent, an arbitrary decision was made to ignore one — usually the second one where it was identifiable.

The hand-printed number to the right of the response column represents the column on the computer card in which the response is to be entered by the key-punch operator. With this scheme, the operator was able to punch the cards directly from the data sheet and the questionnaire.

Data Collection

The questionnaires were checked for completeness when they were returned. When two responses were given, the second one was ignored unless it appeared that the respondent might have chosen some other alternate had one been printed. In such a case, an arbitrary choice was made either to use one of the responses or to use one that had been added. Written explanations and comments were assigned a numerical response and entered for the respondent. The assigned numerical responses

are listed in Appendix 2.

The initial letter and questionnaire were sent with a stamped, self-addressed envelope. This letter appears in Appendix 5. The reference to courses in the postscript was a further aid to identifying the student who responded. Each questionnaire carried a code number which also appeared as the file number on the Personal Data Sheet; thus, when the questionnaire was returned, it was a simple matter to match it with the correct Personal Data Sheet.

Three weeks after the initial letter was sent, a reminder and a duplicate questionnaire were sent. This questionnaire bore no coded number on it, but the Additional Information Sheet (which appears in Appendix 6) was attached, and served as adequate identification of the student. The reminder letter is in Appendix 7.

After two or three more weeks had passed, a third letter was sent asking for the student's co-operation in returning the questionnaire. This letter is in Appendix 9. For those respondents who returned the questionnaire, a letter of appreciation was sent within three days of the receipt of the questionnaire. It was felt that this system of follow-up contributed to the high return of responses. The letter of appreciation is in Appendix 8.

Data Analysis

A total of 531 questionnaires was sent out to former students. Of this number, 355 or 66.9% were returned. Unfortunately, some of the returns were not usable because they were either unidentifiable, received too late, or incomplete. The number of usable responses was 342 or 64.4% of those that were originally sent out. This was felt to be a high enough return to continue the study. A detailed breakdown of the questionnaires sent out and returned is shown in Table 2.

Of the 531 questionnaires sent out, 304 were sent to students attending a regular classroom and 227 were sent to non-school students. The percentage of returns was higher from the non-school students, who returned 68.3%, as compared with the classroom students, who returned 65.8%. The usable returns showed 62.8% from the classroom students and 66.5% from the non-school students. If a bias exists in the responses, it is in this area. There would be relatively more responses from a minority group. In view of the small difference in responses between these two groups, however, this was not felt to be a serious enough bias to halt the study. Table 3 illustrates the number of returns from the non-school ("c") students and the classroom ("s") students.

Table 2

Summary of Questionnaires Sent and Returned

Series	Number Sent	Number Returned	Number Usable	Percent Returned	Percent Usable
1c	3	2	2	66.7	66.7
1s	54	40	37	74.1	68.5
Total	57	42	39	73.7	68.4
2c	21	17	17	81.0	81.0
2s	97	61	59	62.9	60.8
Total	118	78	76	66.1	64.4
3c	67	45	44	67.2	65.7
3s	32	19	19	59.4	59.4
Total	99	64	63	64.6	63.6
4c	136	91	88	66.9	64.7
4s	121	80	76	66.1	62.8
Total	257	171	164	66.5	63.8
School Total	531	355	342	66.9	64.4

Table 3

Responses from Non-classroom and Classroom Students

	"c"	"s"	Total
Questionnaires sent	227	304	531
Percent of sample	42.7	57.3	100.0
Questionnaires returned	155	200	355
Percent returned	68.3	65.8	66.9
Usable responses	151	191	342
Percent usable	66.5	62.8	64.4
Incomplete questionnaires	4	3	7
Unidentified questionnaires	-	3	3
Late receipts	-	3	3
Not returned	72	104	176
Percent not returned	31.7	34.2	33.1
Percent of responses	44.2	55.8	100.0

Limitations and Delimitations

This study was concerned only with those students who registered during the 1973-74 school year in senior high school courses. No attempt was made to separate the students who were also receiving instruction in the classroom from those who were not. Whether there was a significant difference in the responses of these two groups was not determined by this study.

A further limitation was that the students in institutions, especially in gaols, were not identified. In view of Friesen's findings (1967) that dropouts feel rejected by their teachers, and other findings that happy students tend to stay in school, these responses

could be significant in the total analysis.

Summary of Chapter III

A stratified random sample of approximately five hundred students was chosen from the enrollment lists at the Alberta Correspondence School. The sample resembled the total school population very closely.

The questionnaire was first field-tested, and then distributed by mail. There were 342 usable returns. This represented 64.4% of the sample. Although more questionnaires were sent to classroom students than to non-classroom students, the latter returned relatively more questionnaires for analysis. The difference in returns was not felt to be a serious enough bias to halt the study.

No attempt was made to differentiate between the responses from the classroom students and the responses from the non-classroom students; nor was any attempt made to separate the responses of those students who were in institutions.

CHAPTER IV

THE CORRESPONDENCE STUDENT

This chapter describes the students who were enrolled with the Alberta Correspondence School during the 1973-74 school year. Data on some of the personal characteristics, the home background, the courses in which the students enrolled, and some of the feelings they had about correspondence study are included.

Distribution by Sex and Age

The distribution of student responses according to sex is shown in Table 4. Females represent 64.3% of the usable responses. Males make up the remaining 35.7%. A similar 2-to-1 ratio was true for the completions, non-completions, and non-starters.

Distribution by age is also shown in Table 4. Students who completed courses ranged in age from 15 to 57 years of age. The 16 and 17 year age groups contained the majority of the students. Twenty-seven out of fifty males, or 54%, were in this age group, while fifty-four out of eighty-nine females, or 60.7%, were sixteen or seventeen years of age.

The non-completers showed a slightly wider age range of 14 to 64 years. Twenty out of fifty-four males,

Table 4

Distribution by Sex and Age in Years

		Responses		Age in Years		
		Number	Percent	Range	Mode	Mean
Completions	- Male	50	36.0	15-57	17	
	- Female	89	64.0	15-57	17	
		139				20.2
Non-completers	- Male	54	34.0	14-59	17	
	-Female	105	66.0	15-64	16	
		159				21.6
Non-starters	- Male	18	40.9	15-31	17	
	- Female	26	59.1	15-44	17	
		44				19.8
Totals	- Male	122	35.7	14-59	17	
	- Female	220	64.3	15-64	17	
		342				20.8

or 37.0%, and forty-five out of one hundred five females, or 42.9%, were in the sixteen and seventeen year age category.

The non-starters, those students who sent no lessons for correction or who received no gradings on lessons because of poor work, had the narrowest age range of 15 to 44 years. Forty-five percent of this group were in the sixteen and seventeen year category.

The overall picture indicates that almost two thirds of the correspondence students were female, and that half the total school population were in the sixteen and seventeen year age group.

Occupations of Students

Table 5 shows the distribution of respondents according to their activities at the time of the survey. It would be reasonable to expect a distribution of male and female students similar to the ratio of total male and female students in the survey, yet this is not the case. Almost half the respondents (46.9%) were employed full time, and the numbers of males and females were fairly similar: 73 males and 87 females. In the second category, "attending school", the ratios were closer, but there were more females than males: 60 to 26. These figures would seem to indicate that more girls than boys are using correspondence courses to help complete a high school program.

Table 5

Occupations of Students

	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters		Totals	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Number	Percent
Working full time	31	30	30	42	12	15	160	46.9
Attending school	12	27	10	30	4	3	86	25.2
Attending school and working	12	10	7	11	1	2	33	9.7
Working part-time	1	2	2	4	-	1	10	2.9
Unemployed	3	11	5	12	1	3	35	10.3
Housewife	-	9	-	5	-	2	16	4.7
In an institution	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.3
Totals	50	89	54	104*	18	26	341	100.0

* one student sent no response

Geographic Distribution of Students

A map of the school divisions and counties was divided into nine zones and students were identified as residents of these zones. A replica of the map appears in the Questionnaire in Appendix 4.

An inspection of Table 6 would seem to indicate that distance from the Alberta Correspondence School had an influence on the number of students who enrolled from an area. Edmonton was listed as the place of residence by 79 students, or 23.1% of those surveyed. Calgary, on the other hand, was listed by 31 students, or 9.1% of those surveyed. The zones nearest Edmonton contributed the most students.

Table 6

Ranked Geographic Distribution of Students

Zone	Number	Percentage
Edmonton City (Zone 7)	79	23.1
North Eastern Alberta (Zone 2)	47	13.7
North Central Alberta (Zone 3)	46	13.5
Central Alberta (Zone 4)	36	10.5
Northern Alberta (Zone 1)	31	9.1
Calgary City (Zone 8)	31	9.1
Southern Alberta (Zone 6)	30	8.8
South Central Alberta (Zone 5)	19	5.6
Outside Alberta (Zone 10)	15	4.4
Western Alberta (Zone 9)	8	2.3

Access to Telephone

Three female respondents left this question blank. Of the remaining 339 respondents, fifteen did not have access to a telephone. Three of those residing outside Alberta had no telephone. This information would appear to indicate that the telephone could be used in many teacher-pupil discussions.

Number of Schools Attended

Although the questionnaire asked the students to indicate the number of times they changed schools, when the information was coded for entry on computer cards, it was adjusted to show the number of schools attended. Those responses which showed "0" changes were recorded as "1" school. Table 7 shows the distribution according to number of schools attended. Four responses from females were left blank.

Table 7

Number of Schools Attended

Number of Schools	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	63	45.7	67	42.7	18	41.9
2	30	21.7	26	16.6	7	16.3
3	16	11.6	15	9.6	6	14.0
4	10	7.3	17	10.8	7	16.3
5	7	5.1	9	5.7	-	-
6	5	3.6	11	7.0	2	4.6
7	1	0.7	1	0.6	1	2.3
8	1	0.7	2	1.3	2	4.6
9+	5	3.6	9	5.7	-	-

Course Financing

Over half the respondents (56.6%) paid for their own correspondence courses from their personal savings. The completers and non-completers showed similar figures in this respect: 55.1% and 55.3%, respectively. Of those who did not send lessons for correction, 65.9% paid for their own courses.

Education Level of Parents

Tables 8 and 9 reveal a trend to substantiate the literature which says that students whose parents have a higher level of education will themselves tend to have a higher level of education. A higher percentage of the completions were from students whose fathers had completed Grade 9 or who had completed high school. Students who did not complete or who did not submit lessons for correction had fathers who had less than Grade 6, or who had some high school, but did not graduate. One statistic which stands out is that 23.1% of the non-starters had fathers who had completed some business, trade, or technical training.

Table 9 shows that mothers who completed school also had children who tended to complete correspondence courses. The one difference is that more students (27.4%) whose mothers had some high school completed their courses than did those whose fathers had some high school (21.2%).

Table 8

Father's Educational Level

	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Below Grade 6	9	7.3	17	13.0	5	12.8
Grade 6 to 9	54	43.9	46	35.1	12	30.7
Some high school	26	21.2	30	22.9	9	23.1
High school grad.	10	8.2	9	6.9	1	2.6
Business, trade, or technical	14	11.4	15	11.4	9	23.1
Some university	2	1.6	5	3.8	1	2.6
University grad.	5	4.0	6	4.6	2	5.1
Post grad. study	3	2.4	3	2.3	-	-

Table 9

Mother's Educational Level

	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Below Grade 6	9	7.3	11	8.0	2	5.1
Grade 6 to 9	36	29.0	43	31.5	9	23.0
Some high school	34	27.4	30	21.9	9	23.0
High school grad.	24	19.4	24	17.5	7	18.0
Business, trade, or technical	12	9.7	14	10.2	5	12.9
Some university	5	4.0	8	5.8	2	5.1
University grad.	3	2.4	6	4.4	4	10.3
Post grad. study	1	0.8	1	0.7	1	2.6

Occupations of Parents

The distribution of students according to their parents' occupations is shown in Tables 10 and 11. Those students whose fathers were classed as self-employed or professional tended to complete their correspondence courses. Those whose fathers were classed as managerial, clerical, or semi-skilled and unskilled tended not to complete their courses. An interesting observation is that those students whose fathers were classed as skilled craftsmen tended not to send lessons at all. A similar phenomenon is observed in Tables 8 and 9. Students whose parents' education is classed as business, trade, or technical tended to be the non-starters.

Table 10

Father's Occupation

	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Professional	11	10.0	10	8.5	2	5.6
Managerial	14	12.6	18	15.2	5	13.9
Clerical, sales	3	2.7	9	7.6	3	8.3
Skilled craftsman	9	8.1	4	3.4	9	25.0
Semi-skilled or unskilled	25	22.5	37	31.4	5	13.9
Self-employed	49	44.1	40	33.9	12	33.3

The figures for mothers' occupations seem to contradict the findings for fathers' occupations and course completions. Perhaps because such a large number of responses are in the "housewife" category, the figures for the remaining categories have limited usefulness.

Table 11

Mother's Occupation

	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Professional	5	4.0	11	8.4	4	10.0
Managerial	1	0.8	7	5.4	1	2.5
Clerical, sales	21	16.9	18	13.7	9	22.5
Housewife	73	59.0	84	64.1	23	57.5
Semi-skilled or unskilled	21	16.9	10	7.6	2	5.0
Self-employed	3	2.4	1	0.8	1	2.5

Importance of a High School Diploma

Over two thirds (67.9%) of the students surveyed replied that the high school diploma was either "quite important" or "very essential." More students who completed correspondence courses thought that the diploma was important than did the non-completers. The non-starters were more evenly split in their opinions, with

20.5% "not sure how important" a high school diploma was. Table 12a shows the distribution of responses on this question.

Table 12a

Importance of a High School Diploma — All Respondents

	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very essential	62	44.5	63	39.7	13	29.5
Quite important	39	28.1	39	24.5	16	36.4
Not sure	19	13.7	27	17.0	9	20.5
Somewhat important	15	10.8	18	11.3	4	9.1
Not important	4	2.9	11	6.9	-	-
No opinion	-	-	1	0.6	2	4.5

Table 12b shows the distribution of responses according to the sex of the respondent. Female students reported that they thought the high school diploma was important more so than did the male students. Almost three quarters (71.8%) of the female students felt that the diploma was of considerable importance. Less than two thirds (60.7%) of the males considered the high school diploma of importance.

Table 12b

Importance of a High School Diploma — Males and Females

	Males		Females	
	No.	%	No.	%
Very essential	35	28.7	103	46.8
Quite important	39	32.0	55	25.0
Not sure	22	18.0	33	15.0
Somewhat important	18	14.8	19	8.6
Not important	7	5.7	8	3.6
No opinion	1	0.8	2	0.9

Future Education Plans

More students who completed correspondence courses indicated a preference to take another correspondence course than did the non-completers and the non-starters, as might be expected. Approximately equal proportions of all three groups indicated a desire to return to a classroom for further education. Night classes were preferred by the non-starters to a greater degree than by either of the other groups who had tried correspondence study. Approximately one third (123 out of 342, or 35.96%) indicated a desire to take more schooling at a later date, with the non-starters having the lowest percentage. The non-starters showed the largest percentage of students who had decided that they

had had enough schooling for the time being. Table 13a shows this distribution.

Table 13a

Future Education Plans -- All Groups

	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Correspondence	19	13.7	10	6.3	3	6.8
Classroom	22	15.8	35	22.0	7	15.9
Night school	4	2.9	6	3.8	5	11.4
School later	50	36.0	60	37.7	13	29.5
No more school	35	25.2	31	19.5	13	29.5
Finish present program	7	5.0	14	8.8	2	4.6
Undecided	2	1.4	3	1.9	1	2.3

To further strengthen the contention that females like correspondence instruction, Table 13b shows that 12.3% of the female students selected that method as a choice for future education. Only 4.1% of the males made this choice. The other choices were more or less evenly split between male and female students.

Table 13b

Future Education Plans -- Males and Females

	Males		Females	
	No.	%	No.	%
Correspondence	5	4.1	27	12.3
Classroom	23	18.9	41	18.6
Night school	6	4.9	9	4.1
School later	48	39.3	75	34.1
No more school	26	21.3	53	24.1
Finish present program	11	9.0	12	5.4
Undecided	3	2.5	3	1.4

Method of More Education

Slightly over half the respondents in all categories felt they would choose some form of daytime classroom instruction if they were to proceed with further education. Approximately one quarter of those students who had tried a correspondence course said they would choose another correspondence course to further their education. Table 14 shows the distribution by groups, and Table 15 shows the ranking of the five most popular reasons these groups gave for choosing the method of furthering their education.

The first reason was chosen by 79 respondents (23.1%); the second reason was chosen by 68 (19.9%); the

Table 14

Method of More Education

	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Correspondence courses	41	29.5	39	24.5	7	15.9
Classroom - full time	61	43.9	69	43.4	17	38.6
Classroom - part time	19	13.6	18	11.3	7	15.9
Night school	14	10.1	29	18.3	13	29.6
Undecided	4	2.9	4	2.5	-	-

Table 15

Reasons for Choices in Table 14 -- Ranked by Group Choices

	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Better interaction	2	1	1	1	2	1
Available only in classroom	1	4	2	2	1	6
Independence of work	3	2	3	3	2	3
Possible to work and study	4	3	4	4	2	7
More time for my family	8	5	10	5	2	7

third by 49 (14.3%); the fourth by 38 (11.1%); and the fifth by 19 (5.6%). All groups felt that classroom study allowed a better interaction among students and between students and teacher.

Program Choice

When the students were asked which program they would choose if they planned to take another course, two said they would choose a course for their leisure. Five others were undecided. The majority of students wanted specific programs. Table 16 shows the statistical breakdown of the students' choices by sex.

Table 16

Choice of Program for More Education -- By Sexes

	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters		Totals	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	No.	%
University	19	39	22	49	5	11	145	42.8
Clerical	1	23	-	22	-	9	55	16.2
Vocational	25	18	21	20	10	4	98	28.9
General	5	7	8	9	3	2	34	10.0
Undecided	-	1	1	3	-	-	5	1.5
Leisure	-	1	-	1	-	-	2	0.6

Almost half the respondents (42.8%) said they would choose university preparation; another 98 (28.9%) chose the vocational or trades route; and 55 (all but one of whom were female) chose secretarial or clerical programs.

What Could Encourage Enrollment in Correspondence?

The two items chosen by most respondents in answer to this question were a greater variety of course offerings, and more personal contact between teacher and pupil. Most completers (36.3%) chose a greater variety of course offerings as the best encouragement to enroll again. More personal contact was chosen by 23.7% of this group, and shorter courses by 19.3%.

The non-completers chose personal contact, short courses, and a greater variety of course offerings as the best encouragement. More personal contact was chosen by 33.5%, shorter courses by 20.1%, a greater variety of courses by 16.1%, and no charge for materials by 11.1%.

The non-starters showed a similar pattern to the non-completers: 32.5% cited more personal contact; 25.0% cited a greater variety of course offerings; and 15.0% cited no charge for materials as the best inducements to enroll again.

Table 17 shows the breakdown of reasons chosen by all three groups as the best reasons to enroll in a correspondence course again.

Table 17

Inducements to Enroll in Correspondence Courses

	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
No charge for materials	8	5.9	17	11.4	6	15.0
Less complex enrollment	4	2.9	5	3.4	3	7.5
More personal contact	32	23.7	50	33.5	13	32.5
Greater course variety	49	36.3	24	16.1	10	25.0
Shorter courses	26	19.3	30	20.1	3	7.5
More guidance	9	6.7	12	8.1	4	10.0
Other reasons	7	5.2	11	7.4	1	2.5
Totals	135	100.0	149	100.0	40	100.0

Activity or Occupation When Last Lesson Submitted

Table 18, which shows the activity or occupation of the students at the time they sent their last lessons in for correction, should be compared with Table 5, which shows the activity or occupation at the time of the survey. The first two categories, entitled "Working full time" and "Attending school", account for two thirds of the total responses. The remaining categories account for the rest and are somewhat irrelevant. The ratios between the male and the female students remain about the same in each category, but the majority of students had begun full time jobs after the survey, whereas at the time of the last lesson, the majority were still in school. This would seem to indicate that some students are using correspondence courses to make up deficiencies in their high school programs by picking up one or two courses to complete the requirements for a high school diploma.

Community Size When Last Lesson Submitted

A definite trend is indicated in Table 19. Over half the students who completed a correspondence course (51.6%) were living in a hamlet or on a farm when they sent their last lesson in for correction. Alternately, of the students who did not complete their correspondence courses, more than half (57.5%) were living in centres of over 10,000 people.

Table 18

Activity or Occupation when Last Lesson Submitted

	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters		Totals	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	No.	%
Working full time	15	13	19	31	7	9	94	27.5
Attending school	22	43	16	33	5	9	128	37.4
Working and school	6	12	8	18	5	4	53	15.5
Working part time	2	6	3	4	-	-	15	4.4
Unemployed	5	11	7	11	-	2	36	10.5
Housewife	-	4	-	6	-	1	11	3.2
In an institution	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	0.3
Unanswered	-	-	1	1	1	1	4	1.2

Table 19

Community Size When Last Lesson Submitted

		Farm or Hamlet		Under 10,000		Over 10,000	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Completers	- Male	27	22.1	11	12.0	12	9.4
	- Female	36	29.5	27	29.3	26	20.5
	Totals	63	51.6	38	41.3	38	29.9
Non-completers	- Male	18	14.8	12	13.0	23	18.1
	- Female	26	21.3	29	31.6	50	39.4
	Totals	44	36.1	41	44.6	73	57.5
Non-starters	- Male	8	6.6	4	4.3	6	4.7
	- Female	7	5.7	9	9.8	10	7.9
	Totals	15	12.3	13	14.1	16	12.6
Total all categories		122	35.8	92	27.0	127	37.2

With Whom Living When Last Lesson Submitted

Table 20 indicates that most correspondence students live at home with both parents. This can be expected since over half the students taking correspondence courses are 16 and 17 years of age. One detail bears noting: while approximately two thirds of the completers (64.7%) and non-starters (62.8%) lived with both parents, less than half the non-completers (48.1%) lived with both parents.

Table 20

With Whom Living at Time of Last Lesson

	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Both parents	90	64.7	76	48.1	27	62.8
One parent or relative	14	10.1	21	13.3	3	7.0
Alone	5	3.6	16	10.1	2	4.7
Spouse or room mate	27	19.4	40	25.3	9	20.9
Institution	3	2.2	5	3.2	2	4.7

Courses Chosen

The course chosen most often for correspondence study was Health and Personal Development 10. This is a course which is available for three, four, or five credits. No textbook is required, and it is considered an easy way to obtain a few high school credits. No doubt these factors contributed to its popularity.

The second most popular course was Accounting 10. This, too, is a course which does not require a textbook. It is available for three credits, and also has the reputation of being an easy way to obtain high school credits.

English 30, which is available for five credits only, and requires several textbooks, was the third most popular course. Its popularity can be attributed to two factors. Firstly, it is a compulsory course for those students who wish to enter university in Alberta. Secondly, it is one of two senior English courses which are acceptable for the standard high school diploma. The other is English 33, which was ranked ninth.

The complete list of courses chosen appears in Table 21. Courses are ranked according to the number of students choosing them for initial enrollment. Not shown in the table are the choices made by twenty-two students (6.4% of the total school enrollment) who chose a variety of non-credit courses for study.

Table 21

Rank Order of Courses Chosen

Rank	Percent of total	Courses Chosen
1	7.9	Health and Personal Development 10
2	6.1	Accounting 10
3	5.6	English 30
4	3.2	Mathematics 15, Typing 10
6	2.6	German 10, English 20 Business Foundations 20
9	2.3	English 33
10	2.0	Occupations 10, Record Keeping 10, Psychology 20, Accounting 20, Physics 30
15	1.8	French 10, Social Studies 30, Mathematics 30, Economics 30
19	1.5	English 10, Foods and Nutrition 10, German 20, Mathematics 25, Art 20, French 30, Shorthand 20, Typing 20
27	1.2	Mathematics 13, Art 10, Physics 20, Agriculture 10, Accounting 30, Law 20, Mathematics 31, Clerical Practice 20
35	0.9	English 13, Drafting 10, Chemistry 10, Social Studies 20, Mathematics 10, German 30, Physics 10, Biology 30, Mathematics 33
44	0.6	Social Studies 10, Science 11, Art 30, Biology 10, Ukrainian 10, French 20, Automotives 10, Home Economics 21, Mathematics 20, Mathematics 23, Chemistry 20, Chemistry 30, Sociology 20
57	0.3	Latin 10, Needlework 10, Geography 20, English 23, Literature 21, Biology 20, Latin 30, Social Studies 36, Ukrainian 30, Electricity 10

Number of Courses Enrolled In

Table 22 shows that most students (71.9%) were enrolled in one correspondence course. One student had enrolled in eight courses, another had enrolled in seven, and the remainder had enrolled in two, three, four, or five courses during the survey period.

Table 22

Number of Courses Enrolled In

	Students	% of Total
One course	246	71.9
Two courses	61	17.8
Three courses	26	7.6
Four courses	6	1.8
Over four courses	3	0.9

Average Lesson Grading at Time of Withdrawal

Tables 23, 24a, and 24b show the lesson gradings at the time of withdrawal, and also show a comparison of average lesson gradings and final results for those who completed their studies. An inspection of the tables shows that male students appear to achieve less than do the females. It also shows that students achieve similar grades whether they complete the course or withdraw.

Table 23

Lesson Gradings at Withdrawal - Non-completers

Grading	Males		Females	
	No.	%	No.	%
A	12	22.2	24	22.9
B	23	42.6	53	50.4
C	16	29.6	24	22.9
D	2	3.7	4	3.8
F	1	1.9	-	-

Table 24a

Comparison of Lesson Gradings and Final Results - Males

Grading	Lessons		Final Results	
	No.	%	No.	%
A	13	26.0	7	14.0
B	19	38.0	19	38.0
C	15	30.0	19	38.0
D	3	6.0	4	8.0
F	-	-	1	2.0

Table 24b

Comparison of Lesson Gradings and Final Results - Females

Grading	Lessons		Final Results	
	No.	%	No.	%
A	25	28.1	28	31.5
B	43	48.3	29	32.6
C	17	19.1	22	24.7
D	4	4.5	8	9.0
F	-	-	2	2.2

Number of Lessons Submitted by Non-completers

Table 25 shows the number of lessons submitted for correction by those students who did not write a final test in the course in which they were registered. Although most courses have twenty lessons, the category labelled "over 20" is used to indicate those students who were enrolled in more than one course, and who did not complete any course. The table also shows that two thirds (67.3%) of the non-completers stopped sending lessons by Lesson 10. Over half the students (52.2%) stopped sending lessons after Lesson 6.

Table 25

Lessons Sent In by Non-completers

Lessons	Males		Females		Totals	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	3	5.6	8	7.6	11	6.9
2	9	16.7	8	7.6	17	10.7
3	4	7.4	10	9.5	14	8.8
4	3	5.6	14	13.3	17	10.7
5	2	3.7	9	8.6	11	6.9
6	4	7.4	9	8.6	13	8.2
7-8	4	7.4	7	6.7	11	6.9
9-10	4	7.4	9	8.6	13	8.2
11-13	3	5.6	9	8.6	12	7.5
14-16	6	11.1	7	6.7	13	8.2
17-20	7	13.0	8	7.6	15	9.4
over 20	5	9.3	7	6.7	12	7.5

Number of Months Enrolled

Table 26 shows the distribution of completers and non-completers according to how long they were active students at the Alberta Correspondence School. The table does not go beyond twenty-four months because that is the maximum number of months a student may be enrolled in one course before he must register as a new student if he wishes to continue in that same course. Each student is allowed one re-registration, which must be made in the school year immediately following the year in which the initial registration was made. Although this procedure allows for a possible twenty-four month period in which the student may complete one course, a more practical period of registration appears to be twelve to fifteen months.

The table reveals that the fourth month after registration has the largest number of completers. In fact, 36% (50 out of 139) completed their courses in the fourth and fifth months after registration. Another 25.3% completed their courses between the sixth and eighth months. The statistics indicate that the males completed their courses sooner than did the females.

The non-completers seemed to give up on their studies within the first three months (44.1% quit after three months). Most females quit in the first month, whereas most males quit in the second month.

Table 26

Number of Months Enrolled -- Completers and Non-completers

Number of months	Completers						Non-completers					
	Males		Females		Total		Males		Females		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	1	2.0	-	-	1	0.7	6	11.1	17	16.2	23	14.5
2	1	2.0	2	2.2	3	2.2	12	22.2	15	14.3	27	17.0
3	2	4.0	6	6.7	8	5.8	7	13.0	13	12.4	20	12.6
4	13	26.0	23	25.8	36	25.9	6	11.1	7	6.7	13	8.2
5	8	16.0	6	6.7	14	10.1	3	5.6	3	2.9	6	3.8
6	4	8.0	4	4.5	8	5.8	1	1.9	13	12.4	14	8.8
7	3	6.0	10	11.2	13	9.4	2	3.7	5	4.8	7	4.4
8	2	4.0	12	13.5	14	10.1	3	5.6	4	3.8	7	4.4
9	2	4.0	6	6.7	8	5.8	2	3.7	3	2.9	5	3.1
10	1	2.0	4	4.5	5	3.6	2	3.7	7	6.7	9	5.7
11-12	4	8.0	3	3.4	7	5.0	3	5.6	9	8.6	12	7.5
13-24	9	18.0	11	12.4	20	14.4	6	11.1	8	7.6	14	8.8
over 24	-	-	2	2.2	2	1.4	1	1.9	1	0.9	2	1.3

Month of Withdrawal

Table 27 identifies the month in which the last lesson was sent in for correction by both the completers and the non-completers. Most completers sent their last lessons in to coincide with the regular school year, i.e. in January and June when the normal semester ends. Two students completed prior to January. The completions showed moderate numbers in the summer months, in preparation for the new school year in September.

Table 27

Month of Withdrawal

Month	Completers			Non-completers		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
October	-	-	-	2	4	6
November	-	1	1	4	10	14
December	-	1	1	2	5	7
January	12	14	26	5	12	17
February	2	5	7	3	3	6
March	3	1	4	3	11	14
April	5	8	13	4	14	18
May	5	6	11	14	16	30
June	14	31	45	9	11	20
July	3	3	6	5	4	9
August	3	11	14	2	10	12
September	3	8	11	1	5	6
Totals	50	89	139	54	105	159

The non-completers did not exhibit such a marked tendency to quit in any particular month, although the period just prior to semester's end had a fairly high incidence of dropouts. May was the heaviest month for dropouts, with April and June close behind.

Average Number of Lessons Submitted per Month

Table 28 shows the average number of lessons per month submitted for correction by both the completers and the non-completers. The difference between the two groups is the frequency of submission. Most completers sent lessons at the rate of between one per week and one every two weeks. Two students who completed sent lessons at an average of less than one per month. In contrast, the non-completers were content with slow submissions. Almost three quarters (74.2%) sent lessons at a rate of less than one every two weeks.

Second Course Choice

Although 84 students chose a second course by correspondence, no single course was more popular than any other. A total of 40 different course offerings was chosen by these 84 students.

With such a varied selection of courses, it was felt that statistics on the lesson grades and final results on the second course would have little value to this study, thus no statistics are reported here.

Table 28

Average Number of Lessons Submitted Per Month

Average no. of Lessons	Completers					
	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
up to 1.0	1	2.0	1	1.1	2	1.4
1.1 to 2.0	12	24.0	22	24.7	34	24.5
2.1 to 3.0	10	20.0	31	34.8	41	29.5
3.1 to 4.0	8	16.0	12	13.5	20	14.4
4.1 to 5.0	9	18.0	16	18.0	25	18.0
5.1 to 6.0	2	4.0	3	3.4	5	3.6
6.1 to 7.0	3	6.0	2	2.2	5	3.6
7.1 to 8.0	1	2.0	-	-	1	0.7
8.1 to 9.0	2	4.0	1	1.1	3	2.2
over 9.0	2	4.0	1	1.1	3	2.2

Average no. of Lessons	Non-completers					
	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
up to 1.0	15	27.8	38	36.2	53	33.3
1.1 to 2.0	23	42.6	42	40.0	65	40.9
2.1 to 3.0	6	11.1	14	13.3	20	12.6
3.1 to 4.0	6	11.1	3	2.9	9	5.7
4.1 to 5.0	2	3.7	5	4.8	7	4.4
5.1 to 6.0	-	-	2	1.8	2	1.3
6.1 to 7.0	1	1.9	1	0.9	2	1.3
over 7.0	1	1.9	-	-	1	0.6

General Feelings About Correspondence Study

A breakdown of the general feelings about study by correspondence is shown in Table 29. It must be kept in mind that the survey was done after the students had already decided whether to complete or not to complete their correspondence studies. The findings may show some of this bias.

Generally speaking, those students who attempted correspondence study had a positive attitude towards it. The ratio was approximately two to one in favour. The non-starters showed an almost even distribution among positive, neutral, and negative feelings about study by correspondence. The percentages were 38.6% showing positive feelings, 29.5% neutral, and 27.3% negative. Another 4.6% chose not to indicate their feelings.

Positive reactions were recorded by 60.4% of the completers and 63.5% of the non-completers. Neutral feelings were recorded by 26.6% of the completers and by 18.9% of the non-completers. Negative feelings were reported by 13.0% of the completers and by 17.0% of the non-completers.

The table also indicates that female students seem to have more positive feelings towards correspondence than did the male students. Almost a quarter of the females (24.1%) said they were "enthusiastic", whereas 13.2% of the male students made this assessment.

Table 29

General Feelings About Correspondence

	Completers					
	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Enthusiastic	3	6.0	23	25.8	26	18.7
Interested	22	44.0	36	40.4	58	41.7
Neutral	19	38.0	18	20.2	37	26.6
Disliked it	5	10.0	9	10.1	14	10.1
Hated it	1	2.0	3	3.4	4	2.9
No comment	-	-	-	-	-	-

	Non-completers					
	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Enthusiastic	4	7.4	27	25.7	31	19.5
Interested	25	46.3	45	42.9	70	44.0
Neutral	14	25.9	16	15.2	30	18.9
Disliked it	7	12.9	16	15.2	23	14.5
Hated it	3	5.6	1	1.0	4	2.5
No comment	1	1.9	-	-	1	0.6

	Non-starters					
	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Enthusiastic	-	-	3	11.5	3	6.8
Interested	6	33.3	8	30.8	14	31.8
Neutral	7	38.9	6	23.1	13	29.5
Disliked it	3	16.7	5	19.2	8	18.2
Hated it	2	11.1	2	7.7	4	9.1
No comment	-	-	2	7.7	2	4.6

Reasons for Enrolling in Correspondence

The single most popular reason for enrolling in correspondence chosen by all three groups was that the course was not available by any other means. This was chosen by 39.5% of those students who completed a course by correspondence. It was also the reason given by 27.7% of the non-completers and by 34.1% of the non-starters. This means that one out of every three correspondence students (114 out of 342) chose correspondence because it was the only way to get the course that they wanted.

The second most popular reason to enroll was the independence offered by correspondence study. About one fifth of the students (69 out of 342, or 20.2%) stated this as their reason for enrolling in correspondence.

Table 30 shows the distribution of responses to this question given by all three groups.

Need for More Education in Present Job

A total of 170 respondents indicated that they had full time jobs. Their reactions to the question, "How much will additional schooling help you in your present job?" are recorded in Table 31. The majority of the respondents felt that it would be of some benefit. The one group that differed was the non-completers. They were split almost evenly on the need for more education. About one third of each group said that it would not help at all. On the basis of these findings, it

Table 30

Reasons for Enrollment in Correspondence

Reasons for enrollment	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
I couldn't afford to give up my job	13	9.3	14	8.8	4	9.1	31	9.1
I like to work on my own	28	20.1	34	21.4	7	15.9	69	20.2
The course not available any other way	55	39.5	44	27.7	15	34.1	114	33.3
I needed the course for my job	4	2.9	7	4.4	-	-	11	3.2
I didn't like school	4	2.9	11	6.9	-	-	15	4.4
I could get my diploma sooner	8	5.8	5	3.1	3	6.8	16	4.7
Illness or disability	4	2.9	9	5.7	2	4.5	15	4.4
I was advised to enroll	8	5.8	16	10.0	8	18.2	32	9.4
I wanted to complete my diploma	15	10.8	17	10.7	4	9.1	36	10.5
No response	-	-	2	1.3	1	2.3	3	0.9

would appear that students are enrolling in correspondence for reasons other than that the course will enhance their opportunities for promotion in their jobs.

Table 31

Need for More Education in Present Job

	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Not at all	21	31.8	27	36.0	11	37.9
A bit	34	51.5	25	33.3	13	44.8
A lot	9	13.6	21	28.0	5	17.3
Unknown	2	3.1	2	2.7	-	-

Correspondence Teacher's Help to the Student

Students were asked to respond to four questions related to the help offered by the correspondence school teachers. One question concerned the amount of help given to the student. The responses to this question appear in Table 32. Two other questions dealt with the kind of help offered. Table 33a tabulates the kind of help appreciated the most by students, and Table 33b tabulates the kind of help appreciated least. The fourth question identifies the ideal kind of help. These results appear in Table 34.

Table 32 shows that those students who completed their courses felt that they were receiving enough help from their correspondence teachers. Those who did not complete were not as happy. If responses 1, 2, and 6 are considered as responses indicating dissatisfaction with the amount of help received, then the table shows that 33% of the completers were dissatisfied, and 46.9% of the non-completers were dissatisfied. The overall picture shows that over half of all students were satisfied with the amount of help given by correspondence teachers.

Table 32

Amount of Help Received from Correspondence Teachers

Description	Completers		Non-completers		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1 No help	5	3.6	17	10.8	22	7.4
2 Very little	23	16.5	28	17.7	51	17.2
3 Enough to get through	15	10.8	17	10.8	32	10.8
4 As much as I wanted	59	42.5	47	29.7	106	35.7
5 A lot	19	13.7	19	12.0	38	12.8
6 Could have used more	18	12.9	29	18.4	47	15.8
7 Other	-	-	1	0.6	1	0.3

As indicated in Table 33a, over one third of all students appreciated the teachers' comments in the margins of the lessons. Page references for answers and further questions guiding the student to find answers for himself were well down the list, although the page references were favoured by the completers more than by the non-completers. The completers also showed a greater preference for answers given by the teachers than did the non-completers. Both groups placed elaboration of missed questions either second or third. Page references and further questions were least appreciated by all students. The remaining kinds of help were more or less evenly distributed. The completers showed a stronger dislike for printed notes than did the non-completers.

Table 33a

Help Most Appreciated

Description	Completers		Non-completers		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Comments	48	35.6	60	39.5	108	37.6
References	12	8.9	4	2.6	16	5.6
Answers	28	20.8	21	13.8	49	17.1
Printed notes	20	14.8	24	15.8	44	15.3
Elaboration	23	17.0	36	23.7	59	20.6
Questions	-	-	2	1.3	2	0.7
Consideration	3	2.2	2	1.3	5	1.7
Other	1	0.7	3	2.0	4	1.4

Table 33b

Help Least Appreciated

Description	Completers		Non-completers		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Comments	10	7.7	10	7.4	20	7.5
References	27	20.8	37	27.2	64	24.1
Answers	11	8.5	19	13.9	30	11.3
Printed notes	15	11.5	8	5.9	23	8.6
Elaboration	10	7.7	10	7.4	20	7.5
Questions	50	38.5	35	25.7	85	32.0
Consideration	5	3.8	11	8.1	16	6.0
Other	2	1.5	6	4.4	8	3.0

Ideal Teacher Help

One third of all students indicated that clear explanations of incorrectly answered questions were considered the ideal kind of help the correspondence teacher could give. One quarter of all students requested more personal contact between teacher and pupil. Detailed statistics are shown in Table 34.

Although the completers and the non-completers both chose clear explanations as the most ideal help, the completers chose encouragement and praise ahead of personal contact. The three most common suggestions for ideal help all contain a common element. Both groups express a strong desire to have a considerate teacher with a humanistic attitude and approach.

Table 34

Ideal Teacher Help

Description	Completers		Non-completers		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
More Personal Contact	9	19.6	15	30.0	24	25.0
Clear Explanations	15	32.6	17	34.0	32	33.3
Encouragement, Praise	11	23.9	9	18.0	20	20.8
No Changes Needed	6	13.0	5	10.0	11	11.5
Other	5	10.9	4	8.0	9	9.4

Help Offered by the Alberta Correspondence School

Students were asked to respond to four questions regarding the help they received from members of the Alberta Correspondence School staff other than their teachers. In compiling these results, responses from all three groups were included because the non-starters also had some contact with the personnel of the School in making their original registrations.

Table 35 gives the responses indicating the kind and amount of help the students felt they were getting when they initially contacted the Alberta Correspondence School. Tables 36a and 36b tabulate the responses for the most helpful and least helpful kinds of information received. Data were also gathered from an open-ended question asking students to identify the kind of information they thought the Alberta Correspondence School should be providing them.

All three groups gave similar responses. All groups said they received the kind and amount of help they expected most of the time. They differed in that 18.6% of the non-starters claimed they had no other contact with the School. These may be the persons who purchased lessons without registering, or who had no intention of making more than the initial contact with the School.

All students found information about courses the

most useful and helpful. The completers were more concerned with final test information than were the non-completers. The non-starters placed this information last. The remaining types of information were given similar ratings by all three groups.

All groups reported that information about selecting appropriate courses was least helpful to them. This may be because most students who enroll already have information about the course they wish to take. Completers felt that the next least helpful information concerned the requirements for the high school diploma. This, too, may be because they already know which requirements are needed for the diploma. Non-completers and non-starters said final test information was the second least helpful information.

Ideal School Information

Fifty-eight replies were received to the question on the kind of information the Alberta Correspondence School should make available to its students. Forty replies stated that general guidance information should be available. These students sought information about courses, programs, and placement testing. The remaining eighteen felt that such things as testing and evaluating procedures needed explanation, and that the student should be given his final evaluation of the course work, as well as his final mark on the test.

Table 35

Amount and Kind of Help from the School

Description	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
No help at all	12	8.8	16	10.3	2	4.6	30	8.9
Some of the time	27	19.7	31	20.0	9	20.9	67	20.0
Most of the time	55	40.2	60	38.7	14	32.6	129	38.5
All of the time	35	25.5	40	25.8	10	23.3	85	25.4
Not applicable	8	5.8	8	5.2	8	18.6	24	7.2

Table 36a

School Help Most Helpful

Description	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Registration	22	16.8	34	23.0	13	31.7	69	21.6
Final tests	37	28.2	21	14.2	1	2.4	59	18.4
Course offerings	50	38.2	64	43.2	14	34.2	128	40.0
Counselling	15	11.5	20	13.5	5	12.2	40	12.5
Not applicable	5	3.8	7	4.7	7	17.1	19	5.9
All was helpful	2	1.5	2	1.4	1	2.4	5	1.6

Table 36b

School Help Least Helpful

Description	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Registration	10	7.9	22	16.8	4	10.3	36	12.2
Final tests	13	10.3	24	18.3	6	15.4	43	14.5
Course offerings	4	3.2	8	6.1	1	2.5	13	4.4
Diploma requirements	31	24.6	18	13.8	4	10.3	53	17.9
Course selection	59	46.8	49	37.4	14	35.9	122	41.2
All was helpful	8	6.4	3	2.3	-	-	11	3.6
Expiry dates	-	-	2	1.5	-	-	2	0.7
Not applicable	1	0.8	5	3.8	10	25.6	16	5.4

Correspondence Study Recommendation

Almost half the respondents (47.2%) said they would recommend correspondence study to many people. Those students who completed a course showed a more favourable bias than did the non-completers or the non-starters. All groups indicated that correspondence study was not meant for everyone. Table 37 shows the distribution of responses to this question.

Summary of Chapter IV

This chapter has identified some characteristics of the correspondence students who were enrolled with the Alberta Correspondence School during the 1973-74 regular school year.

Approximately two thirds of the students (64.3%) were female. A similar 2-to-1 ratio was observed for the completers, the non-completers, and the non-starters.

Most students (54% of the males, and 60.7% of the females) were in the sixteen to seventeen year age group.

At the time of the survey, which was about one year after the students had completed their courses, almost half the respondents were employed full time, and more girls than boys were still in school.

The areas adjacent to Edmonton contributed the largest number of student enrollments. The further from Edmonton, the fewer were the numbers of students enrolling in correspondence.

Table 37

Correspondence Study Recommendations

Response	Completers		Non-completers		Non-starters		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
For everybody	12	8.7	7	4.5	3	7.2	22	6.5
For many people	73	52.9	72	45.9	14	33.3	159	47.2
Not sure	17	12.3	27	17.2	14	33.3	58	17.2
For some people	28	20.3	37	23.5	8	19.0	73	21.7
For nobody	5	3.6	11	7.0	2	4.8	18	5.3
For specific individuals only	3	2.2	3	1.9	1	2.4	7	2.1

Over two thirds of all respondents said that a high school diploma was "very essential", and a higher percentage of completers than non-completers and non-starters saw the diploma as being important. A higher percentage of females than males also placed importance on the high school diploma.

Students who completed or started correspondence courses indicated that they would attempt another course. More females than males indicated they would choose another correspondence course, although over half of all respondents said they would choose classroom instruction for further education because it allowed better interaction between students and between student and teacher.

All respondents felt that a more personal contact between student and teacher would encourage them to enroll in correspondence again.

At the time that the students sent in their last lesson for correction, most were attending school supplementing their program with one or two courses by correspondence.

More students from farms or small communities completed their correspondence studies than did those living in communities of over 10,000 people.

Regarding course choices, the three most often selected were Health and Personal Development 10, Accounting 10, and English 30. These three courses

accounted for almost one fifth (19.6%) of the school's total enrollment.

Students who did not complete correspondence tended to drop out within the first three months of enrollment. Those who completed were usually finished between the fourth and eighth month after enrollment. Half the non-completers stopped after the sixth lesson.

Students who completed sent lessons at a rate of two or three per month for correction. Non-completers sent them at a slower rate, and eventually stopped altogether within a few months.

The general reaction to correspondence seemed to be positive, especially from female students and from those who attempted or completed correspondence.

Many students chose correspondence because they needed several credits to complete a high school diploma, and correspondence was the only way that a course was available when they wanted it.

Over half the students were satisfied with the help that was offered by their correspondence teachers. Most students preferred written comments, and felt that missed questions should be explained more fully to the students. Printed notes, page references, and further questions by the teacher were not desired. Above all, the students wanted a teacher who was considerate and who had a humanistic attitude and approach to teaching.

The students indicated a further preference for general guidance information about courses, programs, and careers.

CHAPTER V

REASONS FOR WITHDRAWAL

This chapter identifies some of the reasons given by correspondence students for discontinuing their studies by correspondence. Tables 38a, 38b, and 38c show the rankings given by the respondents for the reasons that had a major influence on their decision to withdraw from correspondence study. Students were asked to indicate whether these reasons had a major influence, a minor influence, or no influence at all.

Although some of the response items listed in Tables 38a, 38b, and 38c do not seem to apply to the non-starters, several non-starters identified some of these responses as having an influence on their decision to withdraw from correspondence study. Specifically, six students listed "completed the course" as having a major influence on their decision to stop sending lessons. A possible explanation for such a response is that perhaps these students actually began the first lesson, then decided that they had had enough of the course and interpreted this to mean that they had completed it to their own satisfaction.

Other than the reason that they had completed the course, the completers chose the reason that they

had completed as much of the course as they wanted as the second most influential reason for discontinuing. In other words, 137 respondents considered that they had completed the course for their own purposes, even though thirty-seven had not written a final test.

The comment that the course took more time than was anticipated was ranked first by the non-starters and third by the completers. This may indicate that the students feel the courses take up too much of their time.

Also ranked among the first four was a loss of interest in the course. This may be a fault in the course material or a general lack of interest by the student for some other reason.

At the other end of the rankings, all three groups indicated that a lack of money had no influence on their decision to quit. It would appear that the fees presently charged by the Alberta Correspondence School are inconsequential.

Also ranked last or second last by all groups were their personal negative feelings about their teachers. Two explanations may be that the rapport was high between student and teacher, or that the students felt they could have stayed with the course and teacher if it were not for other reasons which made them quit.

Ranked fourth or fifth from the bottom was the reason that lessons were returned too slowly. Although

an average turn around time of 3.5 days was found to be the norm at the Alberta Correspondence School (Alberta Education — Planning and Research Branch, 1977), the students in this survey did not see this delay as reason enough to discontinue their studies.

The final question asked the respondents to identify the single most influential reason causing them to discontinue correspondence study. Table 39 shows the ranking by each group and the overall ranking by all groups. The findings are similar to those in Tables 38a, 38b, and 38c. Although there are fewer responses, they are probably meaningful inasmuch as they attempt to isolate the one reason above all others that had a direct bearing on the decision to drop out of correspondence.

Summary of Chapter V

Several reasons were given by the respondents for withdrawing from correspondence study, but all groups listed a loss of interest in the course and the lengthy time it took to complete a course among the top three. The completers also included the fact that they had completed as much of the course as they wanted. A lack of funds and a poor relationship with the correspondence teacher were at the bottom of the list. The one single reason identified by all groups as being the first or second most influential reason for withdrawing was that the course took too long to complete.

Table 38a

Reasons for Withdrawal - Completers

Rank	Reason	Responses
1.	Completed the course	100
2.	Completed as much as I wanted	37
3.	The course took longer than I expected	21
4.	I lost interest in the course	20
5.	Low grades on lessons	19
6.	I got a full time job	15
7.	The course was not what I expected	14
8.	I made a wrong choice of courses	13
9.	I planned to or did get married	10
10.	I took another correspondence course	9
11.	The course was too difficult	9
12.	I became too ill to continue	8
13.	The lessons were returned too slowly	6
14.	I found that I didn't need the course	5
15.	Not enough money to continue	5
16.	I went to another school	4
17.	I couldn't get along with my teacher	3

Table 38b

Reasons for Withdrawal - Non-completers

Rank	Reasons	Responses
1.	The course took longer than I expected	52
2.	I lost interest in the course	51
3.	The course was not what I expected	30
4.	I got a full time job	28
4.	Completed the course; did not write final	28
6.	Low grades on lessons	24
6.	Completed as much as I wanted	24
6.	I made a wrong choice of courses	24
6.	The course was too difficult	24
10.	I found that I didn't need the course	17
11.	I went to another school	16
12.	I became too ill to continue	13
12.	The lessons were returned too slowly	13
14.	I planned to or did get married	7
14.	I took another correspondence course	7
16.	I couldn't get along with my teacher	6
17.	Not enough money to continue	2

Table 38c

Reasons for Withdrawal - Non-starters

Rank	Reasons	Responses
1.	I lost interest in the course	22
2.	The course took longer than I expected	13
3.	I made a wrong choice of courses	12
3.	The course was not what I expected	12
5.	Completed as much as I wanted	8
5.	The course was too difficult	8
7.	I got a full time job	7
7.	I found that I didn't need the course	7
9.	Completed the course; did not write final	6
10.	I became too ill to continue	4
11.	The lessons were returned too slowly	3
12.	Low grades on lessons	1
12.	I planned to or did get married	1
12.	I took another correspondence course	1
15.	Not enough money to continue	no first place choices
16.	I couldn't get along with my teacher	
17.	I went to another school	

Table 39

Single Most Influential Reason for Discontinuing Correspondence

Rank	Reasons (Ranked by all students)	Ranked by Completers	Ranked by Non-completers	Ranked by Non-starters
1.	I completed as much as I wanted	1	4	3
2.	Not enough time to complete the course	2	1	1
3.	I lost interest - I did not enjoy it	2	2	3
4.	I changed my plans / course	4	3	3
5.	I went to work	6	6	1
6.	Low grades - course too difficult	-	4	7
7.	I needed more encouragement	8	8	6
7.	The lessons were returned too slowly	6	7	-
9.	I planned to or did get married	4	9	7

CHAPTER VI

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, ten recommendations are made based on the observations and conclusions drawn from the findings reported in the preceding chapters. Several observations are made for which no recommendations are forthcoming, but which are deemed worthy of note.

General Observations

A large number of students indicated that they were looking for specific job training or university preparation when they enrolled in correspondence study. It appears reasonable, therefore, to expect that courses be written with this need in mind.

Another observation is that female students are more likely to enroll in correspondence study than are male students. Females also appear to have a higher achievement on lessons and final gradings than do the males. Either this means that courses should be made more appealing to the males, or the Alberta Correspondence School should recognize that its clientele is female and provide courses specifically for them.

Many students choose correspondence instruction for a variety of reasons. If the opportunity for an education is to be made available to all Albertans, the

Alberta Correspondence School must remain an integral part of the education delivery system. It has been reported that Health and Personal Development 10 is the single most popular correspondence course. An enrollment of 7.9% of all students was reported for this course. Another 6.4% of all students chose non-credit courses of one type or another. It appears, therefore, that a substantial number of Albertans are choosing a course by correspondence for reasons other than getting credits towards a high school diploma.

Another indication of the need for correspondence courses is shown in Table 30, where it was reported that one third of all respondents chose correspondence because it was the only means by which they could obtain the course they wanted. An interesting sidelight is that those students who voluntarily chose correspondence had a better completion record than those who were advised by a counsellor to take a correspondence course.

One more observation is worth noting. Students in suburban communities and in small towns or from farms had a better completion record than did those from large urban centres. Over half the students who completed their courses were from small communities. This may be attributed to the presence of many diversions in the large communities thus distracting the students from their studies.

A related observation is that students whose parents were skilled craftsmen or businessmen (in other words, the kinds of occupations most likely found in large urban centres) were less likely to complete their studies than were those students whose parents had jobs in smaller centres. Further, it appeared that parents whose training and occupation made them self-reliant and independent had children who tended to neglect sending lessons in for correction.

Observation: Most correspondence students are located in geographical areas close to Edmonton, where the Alberta Correspondence School has its office.

Recommendation #1

Consideration should be given to establishing offices in other large communities in Alberta in order to encourage enrollment and to provide better education services to more Albertans.

Observation: There appears to be no difference in the completion rates of those students who paid for their own courses and those who had someone else pay.

Recommendation #2

The fee structure should be adjusted to make the fee substantially higher and give more meaning to the student's investment, or courses should be provided without charge.

Observation: Most students enroll in one or two courses.

Recommendation #3

Each student should be limited to one course at one time. A second course may be added to the program after the student completes part of the first course.

Observation: Students feel that the length of time required to complete a course is reason for discontinuing correspondence study.

Recommendation #4

The Alberta Correspondence School should give consideration to preparing courses or modules containing between six and ten lessons to encourage completions.

Observation: Students want teachers to have a personal, humanistic approach and attitude towards teaching. Students need encouragement and reminders to keep working on their courses. Recommendations 5 to 8 point out ways in which the teachers can demonstrate this desired attitude.

Recommendation #5

The Alberta Correspondence School should look at methods of improving interaction with student and teacher.

Recommendation #6

Existing telephone systems (W.A.T.S. and R.I.T.E.) should be used more by teachers to provide personal interaction with students.

Recommendation #7

A travelling laboratory demonstration should be established to take laboratory course experiments to the students and to provide the opportunity to conduct the experiments under the supervision of the teacher.

Recommendation #8

Teachers should be encouraged to use hand-written comments frequently to provide a personal element to the lesson corrections. Pre-printed notes of explanation are too impersonal.

Observation: Students who send lessons in for correction regularly and frequently are more likely to maintain interest and to complete the course than are those who submit lessons irregularly. The remaining recommendations attempt to encourage regular lesson submissions.

Recommendation #9

Correspondence teachers should contact their students by mail or telephone to encourage completions.

Recommendation #10

When a period of two months has elapsed and the student has sent no lessons for correction, a letter or a telephone call should be made to the student to remind him that no lessons have been received recently. More frequent reminders may be made if time permits.

Need for Further Study

An area which seems to need further study is that of male and female bias. Several of the tables indicated that the males and females responded differently to a question which one might expect to be answered similarly by both sexes. No attempt was made in this study to determine whether a bias existed or not. Since some literature indicates that the school generally favors the female student, further study of the correspondence student might indicate whether this bias does in fact exist.

A second area of study is in the inmates of institutions. Literature has stated that the happy student stays on in school. If inmates of gaols are unhappy, the question arises about the impact of their responses on this study, which made no attempt to identify students in institutions. Other institutionalized students who use correspondence as a means to obtain an education may add to a bias if it exists. Further study could determine the impact of such responses on a survey of correspondence students.

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APPENDIX 1

LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE SUCCESSFUL QUESTIONNAIRE

In an article written for the JOURNAL OF PSYCHOLOGY, R. Franzen and P.F. Lazarsfeld (1945) listed four advantages of the mail-out questionnaire:

1. It is relatively inexpensive.
2. The respondent may consult with members of his family if he feels it is necessary.
3. The mail reaches the respondent at his own convenience and in the privacy of his home, thus removing any feeling of fear or threat.
4. It is impersonal and leads to more open responses.

In addition to the above advantages, the mail-out questionnaire seemed obvious for correspondence students because they were already accustomed to doing their communication by mail.

George J. Mouly (1970) and John W. Best (1970) in two separate works noted a variety of cautions and suggestions for the successful questionnaire. These are summarized below:

1. The general topic of the questionnaire must be significant, and must seem so to the respondent. If the topic is considered frivolous, the respondent is less likely to return the questionnaire. A personal appeal to the respondent for his assistance enhances the chance of return.
2. The questionnaire must seek information that is not available elsewhere. If the respondent

feels that he is being used as a convenience, then he is again not likely to return the questionnaire.

3. The questionnaire should be brief, the directions should be simple, clear, and accurate. If the respondent has to figure out a complicated manner of responding, or if he feels too much of his time is being used, the waste paper basket is more likely to receive the questionnaire than is the research student.
4. Each question or item should deal with only one idea. Any complication will either create doubt or uncertainty in the respondent, or cause disinterest. The more variables that are thrown in, the better chance there is of having the question misinterpreted and the subsequent data being invalid.
5. The format should be pleasing, with the printing neat, clear, and attractive.
6. Important items should be defined so that each respondent knows what is being asked. There should be no need for interpretation of the question. Judgements by the respondents should be made on the replies, not on the questions.
7. Closely related to the above is the requirement of objective and unambiguous wording.
8. The questions should follow a good psychological order. Usually, the general questions should come at the beginning, with the more specific ones near the end. The less thinking and evaluating that is done at the beginning, the better the responses will be.

9. Care should be taken not to include potentially embarrassing questions. This means that the researcher should know his respondents in a general way, and he should not include any item that might cause them to refuse to answer, or to answer falsely.
10. Finally, the questions should be so structured that tabulation is easy. This is only common sense and will save the researcher much time.

Three weeks after the questionnaire and covering letter are sent out, the first follow-up letter should be sent. By that time, the respondent has either returned the questionnaire, or has forgotten and needs a reminder. A further three weeks is suggested as a waiting period, and then a cut-off date can be established. Any returns that do not come in within six weeks of the initial mailing are not likely to come in.

W. Rodman Snelling (1969) had a few suggestions about covering letters that accompany questionnaires. He found that if the letters were signed by someone the respondent knew, even if only by name, the chances were better that the questionnaire would be returned. In a study he conducted, he found that letters signed by a former teacher encouraged the former students to return the questionnaires. In this same study, hand-written postscripts were added, often with a personal touch such as the use of a nickname. This also encouraged returns. Follow-up letters bore personal signatures with a few handwritten comments urging the return of the questionnaire. The main body of the letter, however, was run off on a computer. This approach allows each respondent to receive an original typed letter even if the message is the same to all who receive it. Finally, Snelling also hand-stamped the envelopes.

The preceding findings tend to indicate that the more personal the approach is, the more likely is the respondent to co-operate with the researcher.

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APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONNAIRE MODIFICATIONS

Because of the written comments on the questionnaires, responses were added to the items as follows:

Item #1 Added: 6. housewife
7. in an institution/residential school

Item #2 Added: 4. I don't know
5. not applicable

Item #3 Added: 6. complete my present education program
7. undecided

Item #4a Added: 5. undecided

Item #4b The following list was drawn up:

1. I had more independence and control
2. I had more time for my family
3. The classroom allows for better interaction
4. I can't afford to quit my job
5. It is available only in the classroom
6. The classroom presents the course in a more compact period of time
7. I can continue to work while studying
8. I can't work and study at the same time
9. I need someone to keep pushing me
10. Correspondence is the only way available
11. Correspondence allows a better relationship between teacher and student

Item #5 Added: 5. undecided
6. leisure or as a hobby

Item #7 Added: 7. no change is needed
8. a specific place to write the test
9. I do not intend to enroll again

Item #9 Added the same two responses as in Item #1

Item #13 Response #9 was changed to: unemployed/retired
Added: 10. unknown or deceased
(Item #13b had the same list)

Items #14a and #14b The following list of responses was drawn up and used for both items:

1. Professional or technical
2. Manager or proprietor
3. Sales (car, real estate, insurance)
4. Clerical, or office worker
5. Craftsman (N.B. This item became "housewife" for the responses to Item #14b)
6. Semi-skilled e.g. truckdriver
7. Unskilled, laborer, domestic servant
8. Self-employed (includes farmer)
9. Unemployed or retired
10. Unknown or deceased

Item #18 Added: 6. couldn't understand the material

Item #19 The existing #2 and #5 responses were grouped as #2. A new #5 response read: I didn't like the teacher or the school. No respondents chose #6, so it was changed to: I could reduce next year's load and get my diploma sooner.
Added: 9. I needed only a few more credits

Item #20a Added: 7. not applicable, sent no lessons
8. didn't ask for any help, or didn't need any help

Item #20b Added: 7. not applicable, sent no lessons
8. a considerate, personable, humanistic teacher
9. received no help at all

Item #20c Added: 7. not applicable, sent no lessons
8. all help was greatly appreciated
9. received no help at all

Item #20d The following list was compiled:

1. more personal contact
2. clear explanations
3. more page references
4. neater handwriting by the teacher
5. encouragement and praise from the teacher
6. greater demands by the teacher
7. one teacher throughout the course
8. not applicable, sent no lessons
9. all help was useful and appreciated

Item #21a Added: 5. had no other contact
6. no help needed, all help was provided by my school

Item #21b Added: 6. not applicable, sent no lessons
7. asked for no help, no help needed
8. received no help or information at all
9. all information was helpful

Item #21c Added: 6. not applicable, sent no lessons
7. all information was helpful
8. information about expiry dates
9. received no help at all

Item #21d The following list was compiled:

1. an explanation of the testing and evaluation
2. general guidance, especially about courses
3. placement testing
4. final marks available to the students
5. prompt replies to student questions
6. no change needed in anything
7. didn't need any help
8. general information regarding careers
9. not applicable, no lessons sent

Item #22 Added: 6. only to specific individuals who can handle correspondence study

Item #23 The following list of responses was compiled:

1. I need more pushing and encouragement
2. I lost interest and didn't enjoy the course
3. I got married
4. I changed plans or took another course
5. There was not enough time to complete the course
6. I completed as much of the course as I wanted
7. The lessons were returned too slowly
8. I had low grades
9. I got a full time job

APPENDIX 3

PERSONAL DATA SHEET

	DATA	COLUMN
Name: _____		
Address: _____		1-5
File number: _____		6-9
First course number code: _____		10-11
Number of courses: _____		12
Sex: _____		13-14
Age in years in 1973: _____		15
Average lesson grade at withdrawal: _____		16
Final grade if course complete: _____		17-18
Number of lessons sent in: _____		19-20
Number of months enrolled: _____		21-22
Month of withdrawal: _____		23-24
Average number of lessons per month: _____		25-28
Second course: _____		29
Average grade at withdrawal: _____		30
Final grade if completed: _____		

Date questionnaire sent: _____

Date reminder and duplicate sent: _____

Date thank-you letter sent: _____

Date questionnaire completed: _____

APPENDIX 4

ALBERTA CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed so that you will do a minimum of writing. In most cases you will choose a statement that closely represents your feelings. You will then place the number of that statement in a box at the right hand side of the paper.

There are three sections to this questionnaire. In Section A you will be asked some questions about your present set of circumstances. In Section B you will be asked questions that pertain to the set of circumstances that applied when you sent in the last lesson in the course in which you were enrolled in 1973-74. In Section C you will be asked questions about your experiences with correspondence education. Please be frank. If you feel that the suggested responses do not reflect your feelings, use the space provided or use another piece of paper to tell us how you feel. Thank you for your help.

ALBERTA CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A

Read the instructions and statements carefully, and answer all questions. If you feel that you are unable to answer a question, please explain your reason briefly.

This section pertains to your present set of circumstances. Answer the questions as they apply to you at this time. Choose the statement which represents your reply. Place the number of that statement in the column titled "Response".

Item	Question	Response
1.	*What are you doing at the present time?* 1. working full time 2. attending school (full time or part time) 3. working part time and attending school 4. working part time, not attending school 5. unemployed	31
2.	Answer this item only if you are working full time. *How much will additional schooling help you in your present job?* 1. not at all 2. a little bit 3. a lot If none of these apply, give your own response. _____ _____	32
3.	*What are your future educational plans?* 1. enroll in another correspondence course 2. return to the classroom 3. take a night school course 4. take some kind of schooling at a later date 5. no more schooling for the time being If none of these apply, please explain your plans below. _____ _____	33

Item	Question	Response
4a	*If you decided to get more education, which one of the following methods would you choose?* 1. correspondence courses 2. full time classroom attendance 3. part time classroom attendance 4. night school classes If none of these apply, describe the method you would use. _____ _____	34
4b	In a short statement, indicate why you chose the method you did for the above question. _____ _____ _____ _____	35
5.	*If you decided to get more education, which one of the following programs would you choose?* 1. college or university preparation 2. clerical or secretarial training 3. vocational or trades training 4. a general program If none of these apply, describe the program you would choose. _____ _____	36
6.	*How important is a high school diploma to you?* 1. not important at all 2. somewhat important 3. I'm not sure how important 4. quite important 5. very essential	37

Item	Question	Response
7.	*Which one of the following conditions would most likely encourage you to enroll in correspondence courses again?* 1. no charge for the course and lab materials 2. less complicated enrollment procedures 3. more personal contact with the teachers 4. a greater variety of courses offered 5. shorter courses 6. more guidance from the Alberta Correspondence School in selecting appropriate courses If you wish to add something not in the list, use the space below.	38

SECTION B

This series of questions deals with the set of circumstances that applied to you when you sent in your last lesson of the course in which you were enrolled in 1973-1974. It does not matter whether you had completed the course, or whether you had decided to quit. Answer as accurately as your memory will allow.

Item	Question	Response
8.	The map of Alberta on the next page divides the province arbitrarily into nine zones. The heavy black lines form the boundaries within each zone. The school divisions and counties are marked to help you locate your place of residence. *In which zone were you living when you sent in your last correspondence lesson?* 1. Zone 1 Northern Alberta 2. Zone 2 North Eastern Alberta 3. Zone 3 North Central Alberta 4. Zone 4 Central Alberta 5. Zone 5 South Central Alberta 6. Zone 6 Southern Alberta 7. Zone 7 Edmonton City 8. Zone 8 Calgary City 9. Zone 9 Western Alberta 10. Locations outside Alberta	39-40

ZONE 1
ZONE 2
ZONE 3
ZONE 4
ZONE 5
ZONE 6
ZONE 9
(Zone 7 Edmonton)
(Zone 8 Calgary)
PROVINCE OF
ALBERTA
SCHOOL DIVISIONS AND COUNTIES

Item	Question	Response
9.	*What were you doing when you sent your last lesson?* 1. working full time 2. attending school full time 3. working part time and attending school 4. working part time, not attending school 5. unemployed	41
10	*Where were you living at the time?* 1. on a farm or in a hamlet 2. in a village or town of less than 10,000 3. in a city of over 10,000 population	42
11	*With whom were you living at the time?* 1. both parents 2. one parent 3. one step parent 4. foster parents 5. grandparents 6. other relatives 7. alone 8. a spouse or room mate 9. in an institution (dormitory, penitentiary) If none of the above apply, describe your circumstances. _____ _____ _____ _____	43
12	*How would you describe your economic status in your community at that time?* 1. very well off 2. above average 3. average 4. below average	44

Item	Question	Response
13a	*Listed below are nine categories of education. What was the highest category attained by <u>your father</u> at the time you sent in your last lesson?* 1. below grade 6 2. grade 6 to grade 9 3. some high school 4. high school graduate 5. business, trade, technical, etc. 6. some university 7. university graduate 8. post graduate work at university 9. unknown	45
13b	*Use the above list to indicate the highest level attained by <u>your mother</u> at that time.*	46
14a	*Describe briefly <u>your father's</u> occupation at the time when you sent in your last lesson.* _____ _____	47
14b	*Describe briefly <u>your mother's</u> occupation at that time.* _____ _____	48
15	*Did you have a telephone in your home then?* 1. yes 2. no	49
16	Many people change schools because their family moves or because the schools do not have a high enough grade. *How many times did you change schools before you enrolled in correspondence? (Write the number in the space to the right.)*	50
17	*How did you finance your correspondence course?* 1. personal savings 2. parents paid for it 3. scholarship, grant or loan 4. social assistance If none of these apply, please explain your financing. _____ _____	51

SECTION C

The remainder of this questionnaire deals with your correspondence course experiences. In most questions you will be asked to give your personal reactions. We are looking to you for help in identifying areas which need improvement. Please be frank. Your answers can help future correspondence school students.

Item	Question	Response
18	Some students say they were excited about taking courses by correspondence, while others claim it did not appeal to them at all. *How did you feel about correspondence study?* 1. enthusiastic 2. interested 3. neutral 4. disliked it 5. hated it If these words do not adequately express your feelings, feel free to elaborate below. _____ _____	52
19	There are many reasons to choose correspondence over other conventional means of study. Listed below are several of those reasons. *Which single reason was most influential in your decision to enroll originally in correspondence?* 1. I couldn't afford to give up my job 2. I like to work on my own 3. course I wanted not available any other way 4. I needed the course for my employment 5. I like to work at my own speed 6. no direct competition with other students 7. illness or disability left me no choice 8. I was advised to take correspondence If there is another reason, please list it below if it influenced your decision to enroll. _____ _____	53

Item	Question	Response
20a	*How much help did you feel you were getting from your correspondence teacher?* 1. no help at all 2. very little help 3. just enough to get me through 4. as much as I wanted 5. a great deal of help 6. I would have preferred more help	54
20b	Listed below are five ways your correspondence teacher can help you. *Which type of help did you appreciate most?* 1. comments in the lesson margins 2. page references to the text or course 3. answers to questions you got wrong 4. printed notes attached to returned lessons 5. elaboration on the points you missed 6. questions about the exercises you answered If you liked some other type of help better, describe it below. _____ _____	55
20c	*Which one of the above listed kinds of help did you like least? (Please choose one.)* If you liked some type of help less than those listed, describe it. _____ _____	56
20d	If you have other comments to make about the kind of help that was offered or should be offered by the teachers at the Alberta Correspondence School, tell us below. _____ _____ _____ _____	57

Item	Question	Response
21a	*In your other contacts with the personnel at the Alberta Correspondence School, (by telephone, in person, or by letter), did you feel that you were getting the kind and amount of information that you needed?* 1. not at all 2. some of the time 3. most of the time 4. all of the time	58
21b	*What was the most helpful kind of information you received?* 1. information about registering 2. information about final tests 3. information about courses available 4. information about diploma requirements 5. guidance in selecting appropriate courses If some other information was more helpful, list it below. _____ _____	59
21c	*Which <u>one</u> of the five kinds of information listed above was least helpful? (Please choose one.)* If what you considered to be least helpful is not listed, describe the information you think was least helpful to you. _____ _____	60
21d	If you wish to make any comments about the kind of information that <u>should</u> be available from the Alberta Correspondence School, please elaborate below. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	61

Item	Question	Response
22	*Would you recommend correspondence education?* 1. very highly to all people 2. to some extent to many people 3. not sure 4. with some misgivings for some people 5. not at all	62

23 The following have all been given as reasons at one time or another for discontinuing correspondence study. Indicate the relative importance of each reason as it pertained to you when you sent in your last lesson. Check Column 1 if the reason listed had a major influence on your decision; check Column 2 if it had only a minor influence; and check Column 3 if it had no influence at all.

	1	2	3	
1. completed the course				63
2. low grades on lessons				64
3. illness (either personal or family)				65
4. planned to or did get married				66
5. not enough money to continue				67
6. completed as much as I wanted				68
7. made the wrong choice of course				69
8. the course was too difficult				70
9. course was not what I expected				71
10. lost interest in the course				72
11. got a full time job				73
12. took another correspondence course				74
13. went to another school				75
14. course took more time than expected				76
15. found out I didn't need the course				77
16. couldn't get along with the teacher				78
17. lessons were returned too slowly				79

If one reason had more influence than any other list it here. 80

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS SURVEY. YOUR COMMENTS ARE GREATLY APPRECIATED, AND WILL BE HELD IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE. THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY WILL BE USED TO IMPROVE CORRESPONDENCE INSTRUCTION AT THE ALBERTA CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL.

APPENDIX 5

INITIAL LETTER TO STUDENTS

We are currently attempting to assess our service to our students. We feel that you can assist us in this task because you have been one of our students and have first-hand experience. Please take a few minutes of your time now to complete the enclosed questionnaire and to return it in the stamped, self-addressed envelope. Your assistance is essential for a successful survey of our services.

Please answer each question as directed. The information will be kept in strictest confidence and will not be identified with any personal data you provide.

You will notice that the questionnaire has a code number on it. This number will be used to record whether or not the questionnaire is returned so that we will not have to send you a reminder later on.

We thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation and assistance in compiling this information. Without your help this project can not be a complete success. We would appreciate an early reply.

Yours sincerely,

Berthold Figur
Director

sb
Encl.

PS: Our records show that in 1973-74 you were registered in the following courses:

APPENDIX 6

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION SHEET

Please answer the following questions and return this sheet with the questionnaire.

1. List all the courses in which you were enrolled by correspondence in 1973-74, and indicate the final mark you received for the course(s) you completed.

Course	Final mark
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2. What is your birthdate? _____
month day year

3. Indicate whether you are male or female._____

APPENDIX 7

FIRST FOLLOW-UP LETTER AND REMINDER

About three weeks ago we sent you a copy of a questionnaire which we asked you to complete and return. As of this date, we have not received the questionnaire in our office.

We enclose a duplicate copy in the event the first copy has been lost. If you were reluctant to complete the first questionnaire because you felt that your responses could be identified, you will notice that this one has no number or other identifying mark on it. We do ask you, however, to also complete the additional information sheet when you return the questionnaire.

Would you please take a few minutes of your time now to complete this copy and return it in the stamped, self-addressed envelope as soon as possible.

Your assistance will be greatly appreciated, and will help us to improve our service to future students. Without your response it is difficult to pinpoint the particular areas needing attention in correspondence instruction.

We thank you for your concern and cooperation in helping us solve some of our problems.

Yours sincerely,

Berthold Figur
Director

sb
Encl.

APPENDIX 8

THANK-YOU LETTER #1

I am sending this short personal note to express my thanks to you for participating in our recent survey. Without your assistance the survey would not have been complete, and would not have been as successful. Your cooperation was greatly appreciated.

Once again, thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Berthold Figur
Director

sb

APPENDIX 9

THANK-YOU LETTER #2

This is just a short personal note to express my thanks to you for participating in our recent survey.

Because the second questionnaire we sent you had no identification number on it, we are unable to determine whether it has been returned. If you still have one of the questionnaires, please take a few minutes now to complete and return it to us as soon as possible. Without your assistance, our survey will remain incomplete.

If you have already returned the questionnaire, please accept our sincere thanks. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Berthold Figur
Director

sb